



Konrad Schmid, *Gibt es Theologie im Alten Testament? Zum Theologiebegriff in der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft* (Zurich: TVZ), 2013.

Schmid's tome begins with a historical overview of the study of the theology of the Old Testament, including 'theology' in Plato and Josephus and Philo along with the Scholastics and the Reformers (though he only has space to discuss Luther and Melancthon momentarily). He, naturally, also discusses the watershed moment provided by the work of Gabler and his contemporaries and heirs and then proceeds to the Romantics and Judaism and then as well to the Neo-Orthodox Karl Barth.

The core of the book, however, is section C – *Die Entstehung von Theologie in der alttestamentlichen und frühjüdischen Literatur als religionsgeschichtliche Fragestellung* (pp. 53- 116). Not only is this the core of the volume but it is the highlight as well, for here Schmid takes readers on a virtual tour of the 'theologizing' of the Law, Prophets, and Writings. Moreover, he also does a good bit of intertextual study (i.e., how the Prophets made use of the theology of the Torah, etc.).

My favorite section of all, stuck right in the middle of section C, is his brief but powerfully intelligent and invitingly insightful Ch. IV, *Die Theologisierung der politischen Geschichte* (pp. 85-87).

Readers will be very glad to see that Schmid also casts his gaze beyond the Canon and includes discussions of the theology of Second Temple texts like Jubilees and the Dead Sea Scrolls and even the Septuagint and apocalyptic materials.

Here's how Schmid describes his work:

Im Folgenden soll anhand der bescheideneren Fragestellung nach dem möglichen Vorhandensein von Theologie im Alten Testament geklärt werden, wie sich ausgehend von der Bibelwissenschaft und den Befunden in der Bibel ein für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft verwendbarer Theologiebegriff entwickeln lässt (p. 10).

And here's how he summarizes its conclusions:

Deshalb soll und darf eine Theologie des Alten Testaments nicht hinter die Rationalitätsbestrebungen ihrer innerbiblischen Vorläufbewegungen zurückfallen, die zwar selber noch keine explizite Theologien formulieren, wohl aber die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit ihrer späteren Ausbildung geschaffen haben (p. 123).

These two 'bookends' surround a veritable treasure-trove of insight.

The weakness of the volume is its lack of an index (which would have been most helpful) although this is ameliorated by the excessively thorough table of contents. There is also included a very comprehensive bibliography.

When I was a grad student we were required, back 'in the day', to have a reading knowledge of German because almost all of the significant works then done in biblical studies and theology were written in German and many if not most of the most important of them had not yet been translated into English. German was as necessary as Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. It still is, quite frankly, because books like Schmid's are so incredibly useful and the fact that even if it is eventually translated into English (which it should be), the span of time between its first incarnation and its translation will be too long no matter how short (given the fact that students of the Old Testament should read this book now).

German language biblical scholarship took a bit of a vacation in the late 20th and first decade of the 21st century (from around 1990-2010) but it's back and it's back in no small part thanks to books like Schmid's.

If you don't yet read German, learn it. The 'hole' in your education is robbing you of some of the very, very best materials available at present. And when you learn it, read this volume. It will demonstrate to you the truth of what I've said.

Jim West
Quartz Hill School of Theology